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## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

U. S. Department of Agriculture  
and State Agricultural Colleges  
Cooperating

Extension Service, Office of  
Cooperative Extension Work,  
Washington, D. C.

## FURNISHING AND CARING FOR YOUR ROOM

## Suggestions for "Own Your Own Room" Club Demonstrations

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The slogan "Own Your Own Room" seems especially in keeping with your work as club demonstrators in making your rooms and homes in general more attractive and more comfortable. You will wish to learn and be able to demonstrate how to plan a simple and attractive room, how to eliminate undesirable furnishings, how to select and arrange furnishings, how to make the best use of what you already have, how to spend your money wisely for furnishings which you are able to buy, and how to care for your rooms.

The suggestions given in this circular are for bedrooms. If the bedroom is well ventilated, there is no objection to using it for a sitting room occasionally, providing the furnishings are simple. Such a room may include one or two comfortable chairs, a shelf of books, some pictures, and a desk or writing table. It is believed that you, as club demonstrators, will obtain much pleasure and profit in furnishing rooms of this kind. Obtain all the help you can from your State club leader, your county club agent, and all those in your community who have had experience along these special lines. Remember that your chief aim is to make the most improvement in your own room rather than to try to excel the work of some other club demonstrator. In this circular, suggestions are given regarding color, floor and floor coverings, walls, and ceiling, woodwork, furniture, shades, curtains and screens, bedding, bureau and table covers, lighting, pictures and ornaments, and care of your room.

Color

Study the size and lighting of your room before choosing the color, and do not allow yourself to be influenced too much by your liking for pink, blue, or some other one color. Many persons of good taste choose a neutral color for the walls, floor, and larger articles in the room and depend on cushions, table covers, books, and other small bright-colored objects to give the needed color. Chintz in cushions and curtains sometimes suggests the color to be emphasized. Such a room is much more informal and home like than one in which an attempt has been made to have everything match.

Dull blue and green and some shades of purple are known as cool, receding colors and in general make a small room seem larger, and a brightly

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lighted one cooler and more restful. Yellow, cream, russet, rose, and all the modifications of yellow or red, are called warm, advancing colors. In other words, they make a large room smaller, and a poorly lighted one brighter and cozier.

No matter what color scheme is chosen, use the darkest tones for the floor and its covering, lighter tones for the walls, and the lightest of all for the ceiling.

### Floor and Floor Coverings

The smoothly finished floor, neutral in color, darker than the surrounding walls, and partly covered with rugs, is considered best nowadays for the bedroom. It is sanitary, easy to clean, and economical in the long run.

Shellac or wax is probably the best finish for an oak, maple, or other hardwood floor; because these materials give a smooth, durable surface and also keep the natural color of the wood. Soft woods, such as pine and spruce are generally varnished, stained and varnished, or painted, depending on the condition of the wood. Spots and other defects that would show through varnish can often be covered by stain or paint.

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Before applying paint or stain to an old wood floor that has not been finished, draw out all remnants of tacks or drive them below the surface, sandpaper, or plane the wood smooth, scrub it thoroughly with hot soapsuds, and rinse with clear water. Consult the best wood finisher in your locality about the kind of paint or stain to use, and buy only good-quality materials. After the first coat is dry, fill the cracks and holes with good-quality crack filler colored to match the finish. At least two or three coats of finish will be needed.

If the wood is too rough and unsightly to finish and leave uncovered, an all-over covering of matting, plain-colored brussels or ingrain carpet, or linoleum may be used.

Choose rugs of plain color or inconspicuous design and of dull, rather neutral color that will tone in with the rest of the room. You will not tire of such rugs, and they will also look well in other rooms in which you may want to use them later. Rugs of good quality, heavy enough to lie flat and not wrinkle when walked on, wear best, look best, and are a good investment. Attractive bedroom rugs can be made at home by braiding or weaving rags and odds and ends of materials found about the house. For these also, inconspicuous designs and dull, rather dark colors are best.

### Walls and Ceiling

Plain wall papers or those with inconspicuous all-over designs that you will not tire of are best. Gray or cream with a lighter tone for the ceiling makes a good background for pictures and other furnishings and may be



relieved by a narrow border of one or more bright colors if desired. Also brightly colored or figured curtains show to much better advantage with neutral walls. Some club members have papered their rooms, but generally it is better to employ a professional paperhanger. In any case, old paper should be scraped off before new is put on.

Plastered walls in good condition are also attractive if tinted or painted and, after practice on the closet wall or some other inconspicuous place, you may be able to do this for yourself. Some of these finishes, it is claimed, may even be applied over wall paper if it shows no signs of loosening. They are a great improvement over soiled or inappropriate paper. Always test the color first and modify it if necessary.

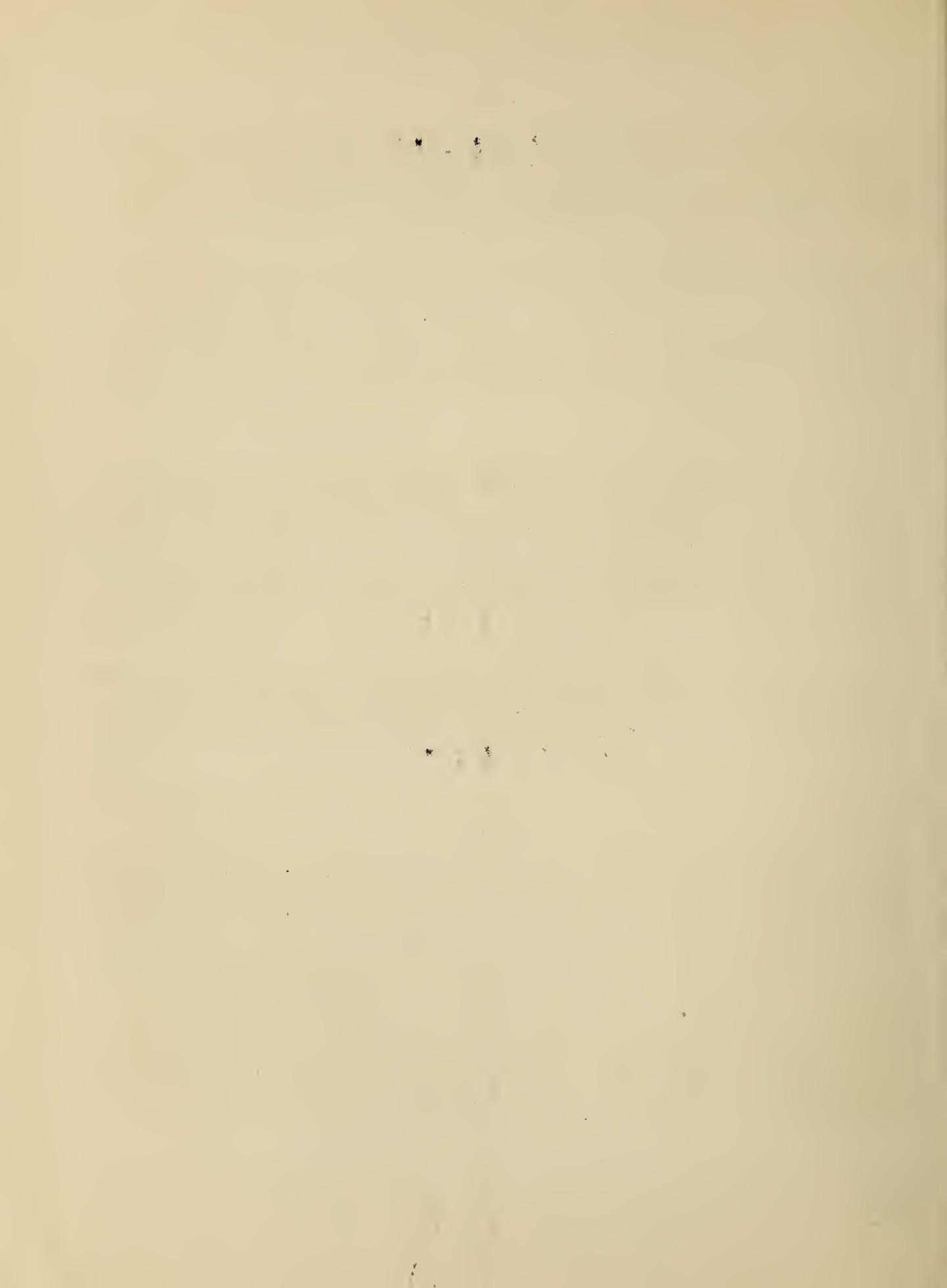
#### Woodwork

Paint is probably the best finish for the woodwork unless it has natural grain or color worth preserving. If the woodwork in your room has been painted before but is worn and shabby, you can perhaps refinish it yourself. First, wash it thoroughly with lukewarm soapsuds; when it is dry, repaint with ivory, white, very light gray or tan, or some other color that will harmonize with the walls and furnishings. If possible, a coat of enamel should be applied over the paint, because it gives a hard, smooth surface that can be easily cleaned.

Badly worn, varnished woodwork may be improved by brushing on a fresh coat of varnish or by rubbing with a good grade of floor wax. Varnished woodwork may be painted, but the old finish must generally be removed first and the wood sandpapered smooth. This work requires skill, and it is best to consult a wood finisher before attempting it.

#### Furniture

Your room needs only a few pieces of furniture. If possible, have them plain and substantial in construction, suited to your needs and to the room. Painted bedroom furniture is especially suitable for rural homes and is much prettier than the cheaper grades of oak or stained wood. Old bureaus, bedsteads, tables and chairs, even though quite different in design, can be made to look as though they belonged together if carefully painted white, ivory, or an attractive shade of gray or tan. Lines of a darker shade or even of a contrasting color may be used as decoration, but the general design of the furniture should be carefully studied first. Very often the "gingerbread" work that spoils otherwise good furniture is merely glued on and can be easily removed before painting; also the high head and foot boards on oldfashioned bedsteads can sometimes be cut down, thus making them less clumsy as well as allowing better circulation of air.



Painting furniture requires some skill and a great deal of patience, but it can be successfully done at home. First, with sandpaper or varnish remover take off the old finish until you have the wood as clean and smooth as possible. Then apply at least two coats, more if necessary, of good-quality paint, allowing each coat to dry thoroughly. After each coat is dry, rub it down with very fine sandpaper and a little oil. This is work requiring skill, and you will need the advice of an expert painter. Last of all, apply a coat of enamel to make the surface smoother, more durable, and easier to clean.

Old furniture of mahogany, walnut, or other beautiful wood should be refinished by an expert, who can bring out the beauty of the grain. Often good results can be obtained by removing the varnish, sandpapering the wood, and rubbing down with wax.

Bed. - The bed is the most important piece of furniture in your room. If you can spend only a limited amount, economize on everything but your bed, especially the mattress and springs. In it you spend about 1/3 of every 24 hours, and for your health and comfort you need a good bed.

For the bedstead choose wood or painted metal in simple design. Elaborate carving is hard to dust, and brass trimmings are likely to become tarnished and shabby. By all means choose a single rather than a double bed, not only because of the narrower bedding needed and the greater comfort and convenience in case of illness, but also because it is more hygienic and restful for every person to sleep alone. If space is limited, a cot bed may be more convenient than one with head and foot boards, and it will be found very comfortable is not too narrow and if so constructed that the mattress does not slip.

Whether a bed is comfortable or not, however, depends not so much on the bedstead as on the springs and mattress. The common kinds of springs are woven wire, with or without reenforcing spirals; national, made up of interlocking sections of rather heavy wire; and spiral, which may or may not be upholstered. Whatever springs you choose, be sure that they are substantial enough to support your weight without sagging too much in one place and at the same time give enough to make the bed comfortable. A somewhat hard bed is more healthful than a very soft one.

Curled hair probably makes the best and most durable mattress and often justifies its high price, because it can be renovated time after time. Good mattresses are also made from cotton. The tacking, including that along the edge, and the quality of the ticking are also points to notice in buying a mattress. Choose plain striped ticking of good grade in preference to that of lightweight flowered design and loose weaves. A slip-on cover of unbleached muslin, which you can make yourself, is excellent for keeping the mattress clean.



Sleeping without a pillow is recommended by many authorities on health; but whether you sleep on it or not, your bed needs at least one pillow to make it look complete. You will probably find a rather small, soft pillow of goose feathers mixed with down, most comfortable and convenient. Very often a pillow is hard and heavy because the feathers have lost their "life" or because it is stuffed too tight. In order to keep the ticking of the pillow from becoming soiled, make a close-fitting, thin, muslin cover buttoned or basted at one end so that it can be slipped off occasionally and washed.

Bureau. - The bureau of chiffonier should have plenty of smooth-sliding drawers for storing your clothing and personal belongings and on it or near it a well-lighted mirror. An improvised dressing table can be made by hanging a mirror over a small table, and this arrangement is to be preferred to the homemade dressing table with flounces of cretonne that serve chiefly to collect dust. An old mirror can often be resilvered by an expert, and you can perhaps refinish or paint the frame. In buying a new mirror, choose good clear glass and a simple wood frame.

Chairs. - One or two straight chairs and a larger, comfortable one are perhaps all that you will have room for. An old-fashioned Windsor chair or one of wicker, either with or without rockers, is a good type for the bedroom. Cushions of chintz or cretonne that tone in with the rest of the room often make a chair prettier and more comfortable, but heavily upholstered furniture that catches and holds dust is not suitable for the bedroom.

Table. - A small table for the workbasket, a few books, and perhaps some personal treasures will make your room more attractive if they do not crowd it. A shelf for some of your favorite books may also be convenient and, at the same time, look attractive.

Wardrobe. - If your room has no closet, you will need a wardrobe in which to keep clothing. The plainest wardrobe is generally the best, provided it is roomy, high enough for long coats and full-length dresses, and has plenty of convenient hooks and a rod for clothes hangers. It should be finished to match the other furniture or perhaps the woodwork. Well-made shoe pockets of denim or some other firm material may be hung on the wardrobe or closet door.

When closet room is limited, a long shallow wooden box equipped with hinged cover and casters so that it can be rolled under the bed or couch out of sight, is useful for storing dresses and other clothing not used very often.

Wastebasket. - Be sure to include in the furnishings of your room a wastebasket that will not tip over easily, that is smooth enough inside so that dust and threads do not stick to it, and from which trash and dust will not drop whenever the basket is moved. Perhaps you can make such a basket.



### Shades, Curtains, and Screens

The purpose of windows is to admit light and air, and shades and curtains should be so chosen and arranged that they do not shut out too much of either. Shades of good quality Holland linen, dark on the outside and white or light colored on the inside, are perhaps best for the bedroom. All white or cream may be better if the room is likely to be dark. Shades are often more conspicuous from the outside of a house; therefore those on the front of the house at least should be alike.

White or cream-colored voile, scrim, Swiss, or cheesecloth, hemmed or hemstitched, makes simple, washable curtains. If the room is very well ventilated and lighted, overcurtains of chintz, cretonne, or other suitable material may be added for color. In choosing a drapery material, be sure that it has enough body to keep it from becoming stringy and yet hangs gracefully, that the color is reasonably fast to sun and washing, and that the pattern is suitable to the size and shape of the curtains made from it.

The best way to make your curtains will depend upon both the size and shape of your windows. For the washable curtains next to an ordinary window, the double sash or "double Dutch" style, as it is sometimes called, is very suitable. The lower part should be attached to the lower window sash so that the curtain is raised with the window; then there is no bother of pinning curtains back, nor danger of their blowing out of the window and becoming soiled and bedraggled. Always make curtains on the straight of the goods and finish edges securely so that they will look well after they are laundered. Also allow for shrinkage on scrim, net, or other cotton materials by folding over an extra thickness on the top or the bottom hem, or perhaps both.

Brass-plated, adjustable curtain rods without ornamental ends are durable convenient, and inexpensive as well as inconspicuous. If you have over-drapery next to curtains, the double rods made especially for such an arrangement will be convenient.

### Bedding and Bureau and Table Covers

Good bedding is not only the pride of all careful housekeepers, but it is an essential part of a comfortable bed. Many of you have already shown that any girl can make her sheets and pillowcases, and you will also be interested in choosing other bedding.

There should be a lightweight washable pad over the mattress to protect it. You may find it economical to buy this pad ready-made, or you can make it of muslin and cotton batting. An old light-colored quilt or cotton blanket that is washable may be used.

The quality of your sheets and pillowcases will depend on how much you want to invest. Considering only materials and time used, ready-made sheets



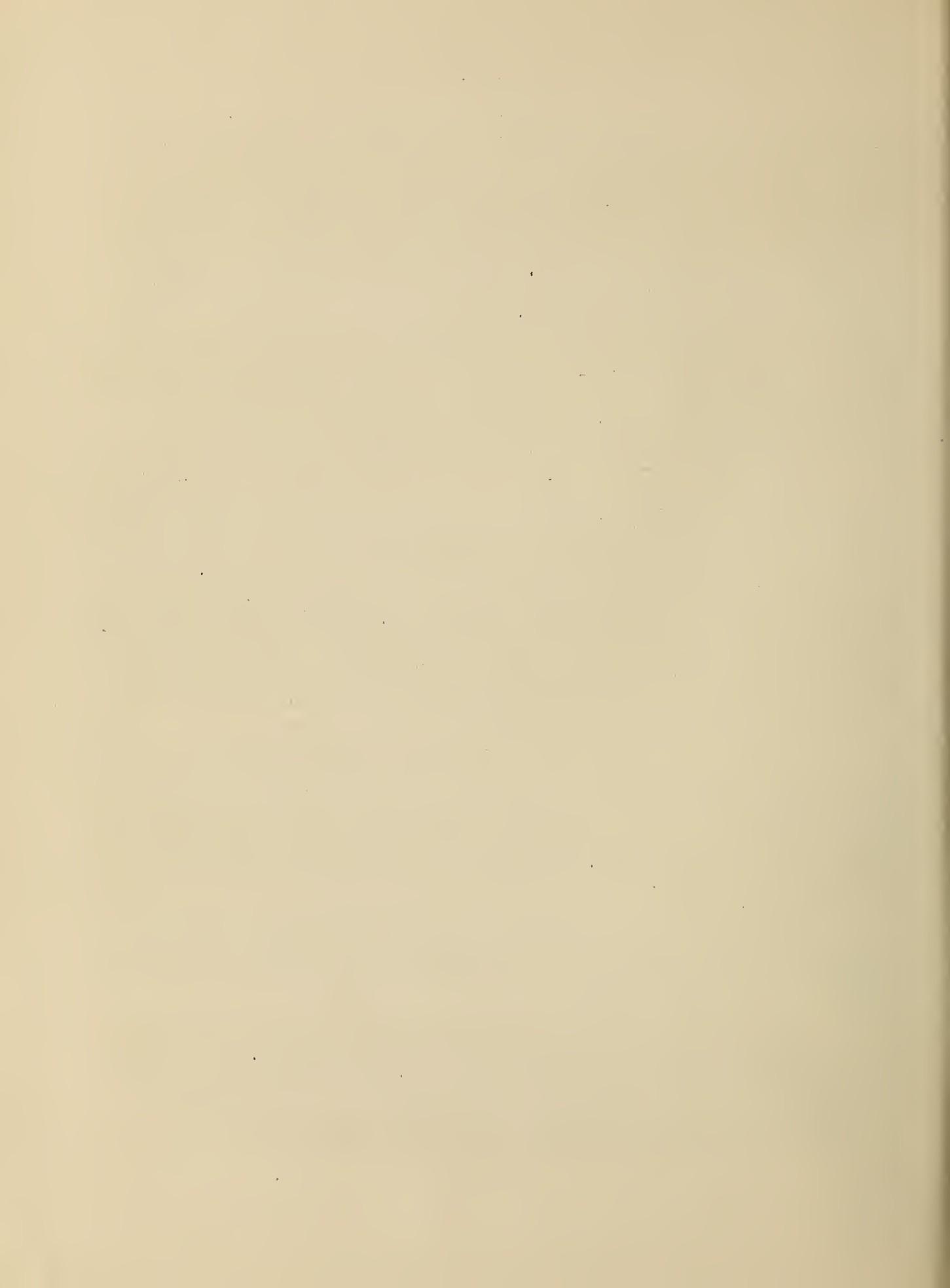
and pillowcases are often more economical than those made at home, but the latter have the great advantage of being made to fit a particular bed. Both sheeting and pillowcasing come in various widths, and the latter is woven in tubular form so that no side seam is needed. Sheets should be from 24 to 36 inches wider and longer than the mattress, so that the ends and sides can be generously tucked in and the top of the upper one turned down to protect the blankets. The hem at the top of a sheet should be at least  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and at the bottom from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch. Machine hemstitching makes a pretty finish for pillowcases and the wider hem of a sheet, and in many communities is done for a small charge per yard. Good handwork is also pretty on bed linen, but be sure that you have enough substantial plain sheets and pillowcases to keep your bed fresh and clean before using time and materials in making embroidered ones. Also, remember that a little handwork well done and in good standard design looks better than a large display. Plain white initials or monograms are the best markings for household linen; it is not easy to embroider them well, but it is an accomplishment worth acquiring.

Soft, fluffy blankets containing a large proportion of good-quality wool are generally considered the most comfortable and also the most durable if given the proper care. In buying them ask the advice of some experienced person and remember that many reliable manufacturers state the percentage of wool on the card attached to the blanket. Cotton blankets are now made so that when new they are as warm as wool, and they are much less expensive. They tend, however, to become matted with wear and washing, which makes them less warm. Professional cleaners can make them "fluffy" again, but this is costly. Blankets without colored borders generally keep their shapes better than those with them, and also there is no risk of color fading or running, but if you like the touch of color be sure that the border is of the same quality wool as the rest of the blanket.

In addition to blankets, you will need a comfortable during very cold weather. Both cotton and wool batting are used as the filling in comfortables; and, though more expensive than cotton, wool is warmer in proportion to the weight and easier to clean. You can buy either kind covered with cheesecloth ready for the outer cover which you can make of any pretty lightweight material and tack on at home, or you may find it more economical to buy a ready-made comfortale.

Old-fashioned pieced quilts, though often remarkable as samples of needlework, are not always comfortable to sleep under, because they are frequently heavy without being warm. Fortunately, the housekeeper of today is choosing more practical bedding.

Striped dimity bedspreads with pillow shams to match are probably the most popular ready-made spreads because they are dainty, easy to launder, durable, and inexpensive. Marseilles, crochet, and other specially woven materials are used in bedspreads, but most of them are heavier and less attractive than dimity. If possible, have two spreads for your bed so that you can change them often enough to keep the bed looking fresh.



Simple covers of either white or natural linen for bureau and table are most practical because they wear well, are easy to wash and iron, and always look attractive. Hemstitching, scalloping, or a simple edge of tatting or crochet is a suitable finish and preferable to elaborate work.

### Lighting

Arrange adequate lighting for your room at night. The bureau and the place where you read or do close work are the two centers that need to be especially well lighted. A wall lamp (gas, electric, or kerosene) probably throws the best light on the bureau, while for reading a table lamp is generally most satisfactory. Pretty colored shades, of course, soften the glare and give the room a cozy air, but "safety first" is a rule never to be disregarded in using inflammable lamp shades. Lights with an open flame should not be placed near curtains or where there is the slightest risk of fire.

### Pictures and Ornaments

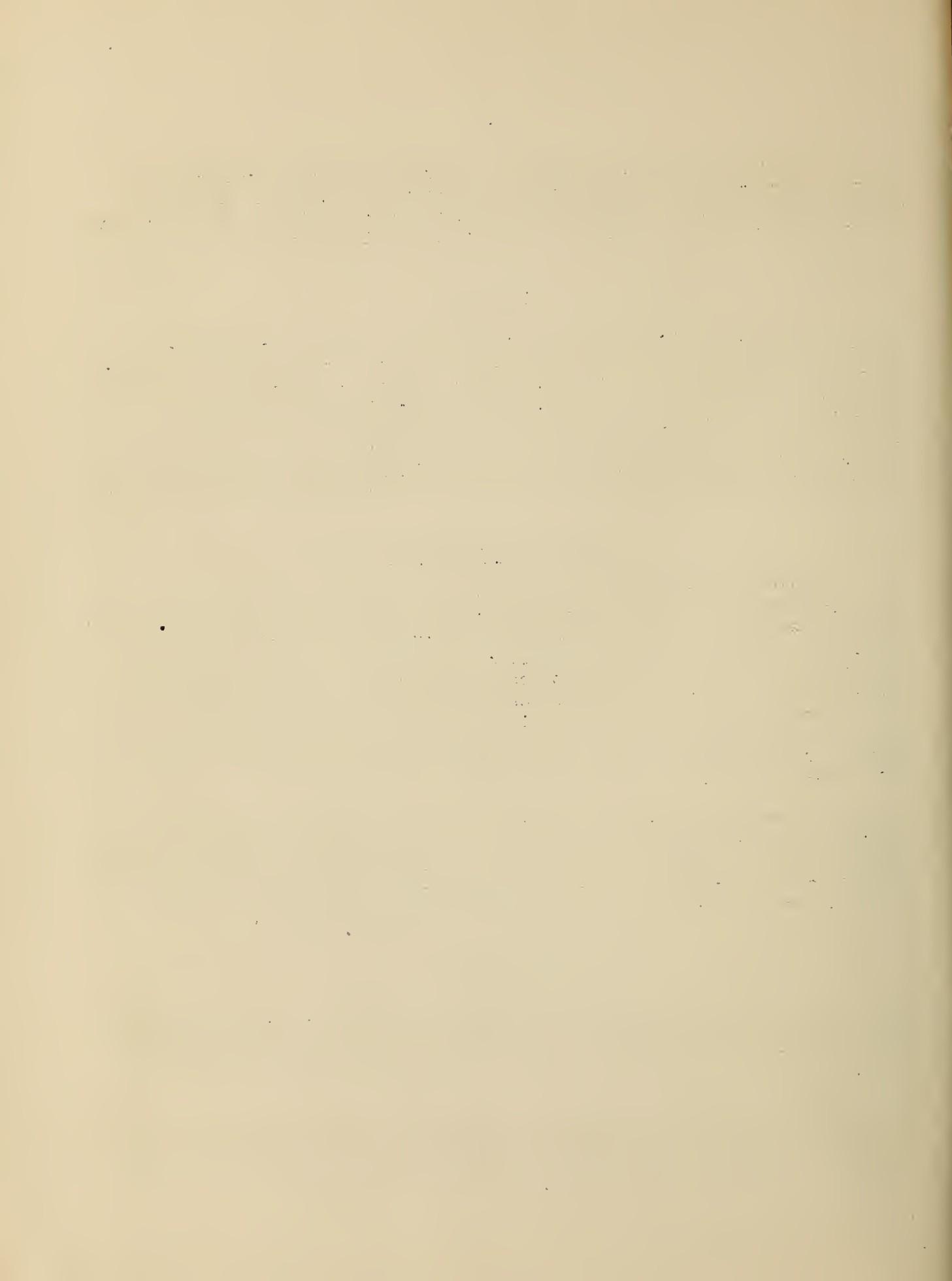
Select a few good pictures that have some special meaning to you, frame them simply, and hang them where they will show to good advantage. Enlarged photographs of places of particular interest to you, prints of fine paintings, or illustrations from magazines and Sunday newspapers can often be picked up at small cost or sometimes for nothing at all and framed with passe-partout or fitted into old frames which you can repair yourself. Have several such pictures to fit a frame if you can, and change them now and then. Choose pictures large enough to fill the wall space; remember that a large number of small pictures, unless very carefully chosen and skillfully hung, give a spotty effect.

The bedroom is not the place for useless ornaments. Bric-a-brac and trinkets of one sort and another collect in every household and should be regularly weeded out in spite of sentiment. A pretty basket for sewing materials, a simple bowl or vase for flowers, and candlesticks with candles in them to be used in emergency are useful and at the same time decorative.

### Care of Room

Keeping your room tidy and cleaning it regularly by the right methods is not only good housekeeping but also wise economy, for the furnishings will remain fresh looking and wear longer. Here are some important points to remember.

Airing room and closet. - When you go to breakfast, be sure that your window is opened and your bed pulled apart so that both covers and mattress will air thoroughly. Also air your clothes closet regularly by leaving the door open at night or some time during the day.



How to make a bed. - Do you know how to make a bed so that it looks neat and is comfortable to sleep in? This is an art worth learning. First, straighten the mattress pad so that it lies smooth and without wrinkles. Over this, spread the under sheet, right side up, with the wide hem at the head and the center of the sheet to the center of the bed. The comfort of a bed depends in a large measure on tucking in the under sheet so securely that it remains smooth and straight. Making mitered corners is one of the best ways of doing this, and any person who has had nurses' training can quickly show you how to make them. Next, put on the upper sheet right side down, allow for a generous turnover at the head, and tuck it in at the foot, using mitered corners. Then, put on the blankets so that their top edge comes about 9 inches below the head of the bed, turn the upper sheet back, and tuck in all edges. Last of all, put on the spread, draw it smooth and straight, and arrange the pillows.

Cleaning a room. - In addition to the daily tidying of your room, it will need thorough cleaning at least once a week. Planning this work carefully beforehand will make it easier and will save your time.

If you have a vacuum cleaner, both large and small rugs can be thoroughly cleaned on the floor without scattering dust. If you do not have a vacuum, roll up small rugs, and if possible take them out-of-doors for a thorough cleaning. Much dust and dirt is thus removed from your room, and the rugs look fresher after airing out-of-doors.

Dust the small articles on your bureau and table, pile them on the bed or a chair, and cover them with a cloth or paper.

Pin the curtains back if necessary, and open the windows at top and bottom.

If the walls are papered or covered with some finish that rubbing does not mar, clean them with a special wall brush or a broom, or floor brush covered with cotton flannel or other soft cloth, using light, overlapping strokes. Calcimine and other wall finishes are streaked by even light rubbing.

The floor should be cleaned next. If it is painted or varnished, sweep it with a soft brush, and dust with an oil mop. Painted floors may also be wiped off occasionally with a damp cloth but do not use strong soaps or scouring powders or too much water, for they will injure the paint. Matting should be swept with a soft brush and dusted with a dry mop or a soft cloth. Carpet and heavy rugs that can not be taken out-of-doors, must of course be cleaned on the floor. In sweeping, hold the broom nearly upright and take short strokes in one direction and with the nap of the rug. Learn how to sweep so that you do not scatter dust any more than necessary.

While the dust is settling, wash the windows if they need it, and remove soiled spots on the woodwork and furniture. Finally, dust the furniture and woodwork thoroughly, and set the room in order.



- 10 -

Send to the United States Department of Agriculture for Farmers' Bulletin 1180 entitled "Housecleaning Made Easier." This bulletin gives details about cleaning all parts of the house and describes the kind of cleaning tools needed.

